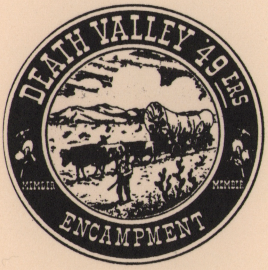
The Wade Story

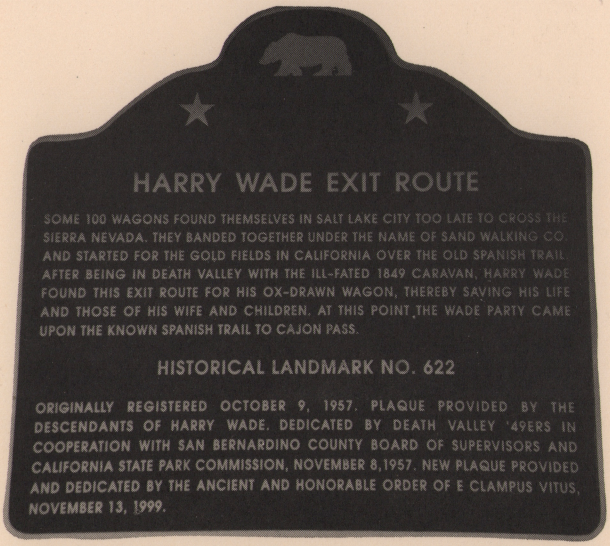
"In and Out of Death Valley"



L. BURR BELDEN

DEDICATION of WADE MONUMENT
NOVEMBER 8, 1957
DEATH VALLEY '49ERS ENCAMPMENT

REPRINTED for the
50TH ANNIVERSARY ENCAMPMENT
1999


HARRY WADE EXIT ROUTE
SOME 100 WAGONS FOUND THEMSELVES IN SALT LAKE CITY TOO LATE TO CROSS THE SIERRA NEVADA. THEY BANDED TOGETHER UNDER THE NAME OF SAND WALKING CO. AND STARTED FOR THE GOLD FIELDS IN CALIFORNIA OVER THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL. AFTER BEING IN DEATH VALLEY WITH THE ILL-FATED 1849 CARAVAN, HARRY WADE FOUND THIS EXIT ROUTE FOR HIS OX-DRAWN WAGON, THEREBY SAVING HIS LIFE AND THOSE OF HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN. AT THIS POINT THE WADE PARTY CAME UPON THE KNOWN SPANISH TRAIL TO CAJON PASS.
HISTORICAL LANDMARK NO. 622
ORIGINALLY REGISTERED OCTOBER 9, 1957. PLAQUE PROVIDED BY THE DESCENDANTS OF HARRY WADE. DEDICATED BY DEATH VALLEY '49ERS IN COOPERATION WITH SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND CALIFORNIA STATE PARK COMMISSION, NOVEMBER 8,1957. NEW PLAQUE PROVIDED AND DEDICATED BY THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF E CLAMPUS VITUS, NOVEMBER 13, 1999.

This plaque was replaced on a new Monument
by Sam Brannan, Julia C. Bulette, Lost Dutchman,
Billy Holcomb, Platrix, John P. Squibob,
and Chief Truckee Chapters
of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus.

The Descendants of Harry and Mary Wade wish
to express their gratitude to the members of
E Clampus Vitus for restoring the WADE Monument
and make it possible for visitors to learn
more about Death Valley history.

The Wade Story

The Death Valley story of 1849 is one of the great epics of the American West. It was in the late summer of that year when gold seekers with some 100 wagons found themselves in Salt Lake City too late in the season to chance a safe crossing of the Sierra Nevada—the direct route to the Mother Lode of California. Accordingly they banded together under the name of the Sand Walking Co., hired a Mormon leader named Capt. Jefferson Hunt as their guide, and started for California over the longer but winter-safe Old Spanish Trail which wound through southern Utah on a somewhat circuitous route to Los Angeles.

This Old Spanish Trail, explored in the larger part by missionary-priests of Spain in the 18th century, had been used annually for pack train commerce between the outpost colonies of New Mexico and California during the decade and a half before the Mexican War.

Discharged soldiers of that war's Mormon Battalion had used the old trail to reach their Salt Lake homes from California, and had found it was passable for wagons. Thus, in the feverish westward movement of 1849 toward the California gold fields, this southern route became the accepted winter road.

Among members of the Sand Walking Co., a loose organization formed for the express purpose of the trip, was a 49 year-old native of Rochester, England, a former coachman to the royal

family, who had come to the United States with his wife and infant son 13 years before.

This former coachman, Harry Wade, had the distinction of being the only member of the ill-fated Death Valley party to escape with his wagon and oxen. Yet, strange to say, the Harry Wade story is relatively unknown. Save for a newspaper letter written by a neighbor, nearly 70 years ago, Wade has received but a line or two of mention in the scores of books written about the tragic Death Valley entrapment of a considerable portion of the Sand Walking Co.

It should be noted that the argonauts, who became lost in Death Valley during December, 1849, found themselves in that desperate plight because they broke away from Captain Hunt and tried to find a short cut to the gold fields. Members of the company who stayed with the guide spent Christmas at Santa Ana del Chino Rancho, the date their lost comrades were struggling half starved down Furnace Creek.

Wade, who was born March 16, 1800, was the son of a Sheffield cutlery maker and shop owner. As royal coachman he had met and married Mary Reynolds Leach, English instructor to the French ambassador's family. Records in the district parish of St. John the Evangelist show Harry and Mary Leach Wade were married Jan. 24, 1835. She was 13 years his junior and an only child of a family with considerable property. Their first child, Harry George Wade was born Dec. 18,1835. When the infant Harry George was but three months old his parents left for America, accompanied by Harry Wade's younger brother, George. The Wade brothers settled in Tioga County, Pa., where they cleared land and operated a sawmill.

A flood destroyed the mill and they abandoned the partially cleared farm and headed west in the late spring of 1844.

Harry Wade and his family bought a farm six miles south of Joliet, Ill. The Wades now had four children. In addition to the infant of three months who had crossed the Atlantic there was a second son, Charles Elyot, born Aug. 12,1837; Almira, born June 21, 1840; and Pristina, born in 1842. At the Illinois farm a fifth child, Richard Angus, was born Oct. 19, 1844. There, also, the younger daughter, Pristina, died in 1847.

With the great trek west to the California gold fields passing their farm, Harry Wade caught the "argonaut fever". He sold his farm early in 1849, bundled his wife and four children into a covered wagon and headed west by what he termed "the southern route." Ever a prudent man, Wade started west with a stout wagon of hardwood, spare oxen, a cow and a young riding mare. The Wade party reached Salt Lake too late to continue direct to California, as has been noted.

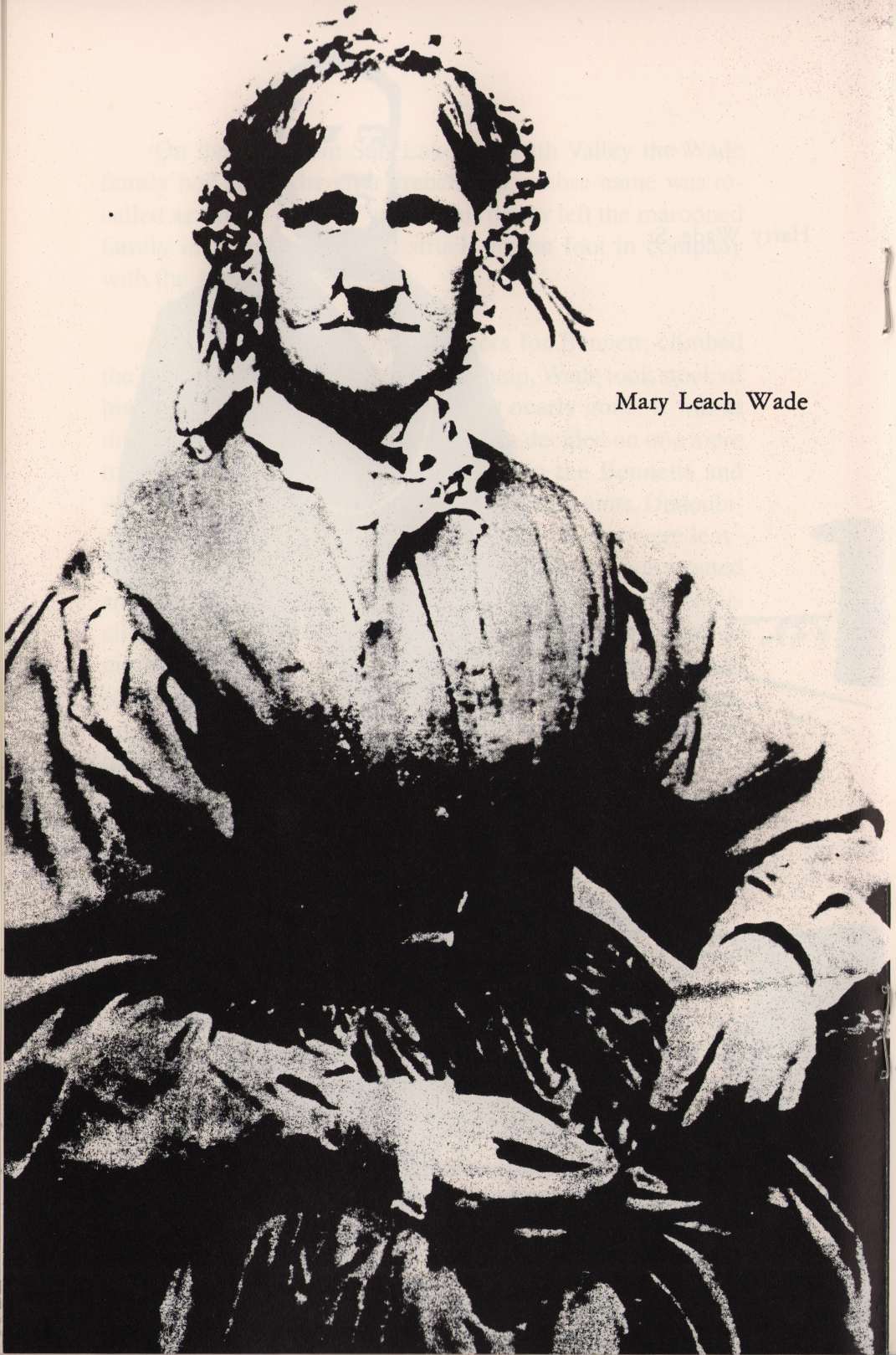
When the Sand Walking Co. broke up, Wade was among those trying the "short cut". Across the Amargosa Desert and down Furnace Creek, Wade drove his oxen in the tracks left by the Bennett and Arcane families. He stayed one day behind as he was running dangerously low on food and needed to conserve his animals. His dropping behind saved useless scouting and also allowed tiny desert springs to refill. Wade crossed Death Valley to the west side and camped close to the Bennett and Arcane wagons. He witnessed the futile attempt of these families to ascend a canyon in the Panamint Range, and also saw two of their drivers, William Lewis Manly and John Rogers, leave for the California settlements in search of help.

On the trail from Salt Lake to Death Valley the Wade family had an ox driver, a Frenchman, whose name was recalled as Charles in later years. This driver left the marooned family in Death Valley and struck out on foot in company with the Arcane drivers.

After Manly and Rogers, drivers for Bennett, climbed the Panamints in search of food and help, Wade took stock of his situation. His supply of flour was nearly gone. It was at this juncture that the husky Englishman decided on one more try to extricate his family. He had seen the Bennetts and Arcanes balked in attempting to scale the Panamints. Undoubtedly he knew the Mississippians and Jayhawkers were leaving by difficult foot paths and trails farther north. Wade scouted around on horseback and noted that to the south the encircling hills seemed lower. He wasn't sure but he thought that might be an exit route. At least that was the general direction of the Old Spanish Trail and Captain Hunt's caravan. Accordingly Wade hitched up and started south. First, however, he took the precaution of making pack saddles of canvas for his oxen in case the wagon must be abandoned. Fourteen-year-old Harry George substituted as ox driver for the Frenchman who had left. Wade scouted ahead on horseback as this desperate flight for survival was begun.

Some others from the disintegrated caravan trailed behind the Wades. One was Richard I. A. Culverwell who, when he found the Wades without spare provisions, turned back again only to die near the Bennett-Arcane camp. Also following the Wade trail was a pack animal group including Louis Nusbaumer whose journal, in the Huntington Library, preserves for us the best account of the Wade exit.

Harry Wade, Sr.



Mary Leach Wade

The route blazed by the wheels of the Wade wagon was the natural, gradual ascent from the Death Valley sink up the bank of the Amargosa River to its bend near Salt Spring. Wade kept no journal so it is not certain, though probable, he found water at Saratoga. At Salt Spring he reached the Old Spanish Trail with its unmistakable signs of travel. He then set out southwest and reached the next waterhole, Bitter Spring, where Mary Wade prepared a scanty meal with the last of the flour. The Salt Spring-Bitter Spring portion of the Old Spanish Trail was known as "the journada", a dry stretch. Failure and death stalked close behind the slow-moving and starving ox team of the Wades as the faltering animals were goaded on by an emaciated man and boy.

The real rescue of the Wades came at Bitter Spring where, providentially, they met some traders. From them Wade is known to have bought flour and, possibly, another mule or horse. With flour, Wade could afford to rest or lay over at Bitter Spring, despite the poor quality of the water. He then followed the trail through a pass in the Alvord Mountains and reached the Mojave River a few miles east of the present Yermo. Enroute another water hole was reached, one of fair quality, at Coyote Holes.

Wade followed the tracks of Hunt's caravan up the Mojave to Cajon Pass. Somewhere along the river he caught up with another group, for there is a contemporary record of his bringing two wagons through Cajon Pass. From Cajon Pass to Los Angeles the Wades are believed to have taken the northern, or Cucamonga fork of the road rather than that via Santa Ana del Chino. The older children recalled stopping at the San Jose Rancho, today's Spadra.

From Los Angeles the Wades headed north for the gold fields, their destination. They stopped at Fine Gold Gulch on the Tuolumne River. There, while mining, the party was attacked by Indians who stole all the food left in camp. The Indian attack settled things for Wade. He had had his fill of mining in a few weeks and now turned his weather beaten wagon toward the Santa Clara Valley.

The family first settled at Meridian Corners where Wade bought 160 acres of the Quito Ranch and planted grain. There the youngest child, Mary Ann Wade, was born Jan. 2, 1851, the now historic wagon being her birthplace. The summer of 1851 was a dry one in the Santa Clara Valley. Corn would not head. For Harry Wade a place that would not grow corn was little better than a desert and he had seen all the deserts he wanted for one lifetime. Accordingly he abandoned plans to build a house at Meridian, the present Saratoga, and moved to Alviso, right at the tidelands at the southern tip of San Francisco Bay.

In the fall of 1851 Alviso appeared as a thriving and growing port city. There Wade bought a house and some additional lots. With his older son he went into the teaming business. Freight for San Jose, Santa Clara and the busy quicksilver mine at. New Almaden was landed at Alviso. The second boy, Charles, started driving while in his teens as his father's business expanded. One of the neighbors was Peter Burnett, California's first governor under statehood, and Burnett was predicting big things for the little bay port.

Neither Harry Wade nor his neighbors ever had cause to complain of drought at Alviso. The winters brought floods and

streets were flooded at high tide each month. A favorite family story was about Charles finding a big salmon flopping in a nearby yard and bringing it home for the family table.

In addition to his freighting, Wade operated a hotel he called the American House. It was destroyed by fire in the late 1860's. The date is fixed by Mrs. Lydia Ortley Hunter, oldest of the Wade grandchildren who was born in 1860 and remembers seeing a mounted Mexican ride his horse up the hotel steps. She thought him a very bad man because he used spurs to make his horse mount the steps.

Mrs. Hunter was the oldest child of Almira Wade, the girl who came through Death Valley. Almira became the bride of Capt. J. J. Ortley in 1858. Captain Ortley owned several coastal ships which carried freight and passengers between San Francisco and Alviso. After his marriage he and his father-in-law formed an informal partnership and quoted San Jose and San Francisco delivered prices for goods. Wade added a stagecoach to his freight wagons so both passengers and freight were ticketed through by the Wade-Ortley "partnership". Almira kept books for the transportation business and also the warehouse, a brick one, built at Alviso.

When Wade retired, in his late 70's, he continued to live at Alviso until his death in 1883. His wife, Mary, lived until 1889. Their daughter, Mary Ann, cared for them in their old age.

Harry George Wade, the boy who drove the ox teams out of Death Valley, started freighting with his father. First he bought a four-horse team. Later he purchased a piece of wa-

terfront and built a wharf which he extended into deep water where goods could be transferred direct from ship to wagon. He branched into the coal business, hauling coal from barges to supply the Agnew State Hospital. In the Civil War, Harry enlisted in Co. C of the 5th California Infantry. He entered the service July 18, 1863 and had charge of the state armory at Alviso. After the war he resumed freighting.

On May 6, 1869 he married Mary Davis, an Irish girl, at the Santa Clara Mission. One of their children, Annie Wade Lowe, has assisted in obtaining material for this little account as have her cousins, Mrs. Hunter, Vernie Bradley Sutcliffe and Harriet Ortley White.

Charley Elyot Wade, after joining his father and older brother in the teaming business, married Miss Estefano Alviso, in 1863. He and his wife were given 500 acres of the old rancho, their land being the closest to San Jose. The land was rich and Charles pioneered intensive farming by raising strawberries, onions and raspberries in addition to hay and grain. He also conducted a large dairy. He and his wife had 15 children. Five of them were living early this year.

Richard Angus Wade, youngest member of the family to cross Death Valley, also assisted in the family business as a youth. His job was to care for the stock. Later he branched into the livery business and ran a passenger stage. He is said to have been James Lick's favorite driver for the difficult mountain trip to the site where Lick was building his famous observatory. Richard Wade married twice. His first wife died. His second wife was Marie Berryessa, member of a prominent native land grant family. They had no children.

Mary Ann Wade, the little girl born in her parents' historic covered wagon at Meridian, cared for her parents as a young woman. At 35 she became the wife of Charles A. Bradley, railroad agent at Alviso. She had one daughter, Vernie, who now lives in a home she built on the site of her grandfather's house in Alviso. Numerous Wade family heirlooms and records are her prized possessions.

Railroads and motor vehicles have long since made teaming and San Francisco bay steamer service obsolete, but on a brick warehouse at Alviso may still be read the fading sign, Harry G. Wade, while numerous California families today proudly trace their heritage to the rugged pioneer of 1849 whose self reliance enabled him to find a way out of Death Valley—the only route over which he could drive his wagon.

Although nearly 150 years have passed since Harry Wade and his family settled in Alviso, (now a district of San Jose) at the South end of San Francisco Bay; there are still indications of his presence. Although in disrepair, the family home is still standing on El Dorado Street. It had been prefabricated on the East Coast and shipped 'round the Horn' to be assembled here in 1851. One of Harry Wade's Stagecoaches was sold to the Wells Fargo Bank in 1928 by his daughter. It can be seen today in the window of the Wells Fargo Bank's Montgomery Street Museum in San Francisco.

1999 ADDENDUM - THE WADE STORY

Revised and Continued by Mary Jensen

Harry Wade was my great great grandfather. Since the publication of the first edition of this booklet, I have been doing further research on the Wade family. The purpose of this research was to verify certain items that are contained in this booklet, learn more about the family while they lived in England and to locate other descendants of Harry Wade and Mary Wade. My research has taken me to England to find the church where Harry Wade and Mary Reynolds Leach were married and search the records in the Public Records Office, London. I was also successful in finding Harry Wade's parents, his brothers and sisters.

The Wade Story, written by L. Burr Belden was the first Keepsake Publication by the Death Valley '49 ers and has been a great resource for me.

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In 1798, Lt. Andrew Wade, of the Royal Navy, married Ann Grant at Dundee Parish, Scotland. By 1800 they had moved to St. Nicholas Parish in Rochester, Kent, England. Harry Wade was born on March 16, 1800. He had three brothers and two sisters who were also born in St. Nicholas Parish; Charles Wade, July 21, 1802; George Wade, January 25, 1806; Frederick Wade, June 18,1808; Elizabeth Wade, September 26, 1810; Ann Wade, whose christening date was March 27, 1814.

Harry Wade was married to Mary Reynolds Leach on January 24, 1835 at the St. John's Evangelist Church, Lambeth, Surrey, England. The church still exists today and is located across from the Waterloo Station. A son, Harry George, was born December 18, 1835.

The family left England in 1837 and, after a 38 day passage from Thames to Portsmouth to New York, Harry, Mary and their one year old son, Harry George, arrived in New York on the ship Toronto, on March 13, 1837.

The story regarding Harry George, Charles Elliott and Richard Angus has already been covered in "The Wade Story."

The story now continues about Almira Leach Wade the girl who came through Death Valley at the age of 9.

Almira became the bride of Captain John Jacob Ortley on December 24, 1858. They had eleven children; Lydia Almira born in 1860; Julia Douglas born 1861; Lucy Wade born 1863; Mary Leach born 1865; John Jacob Junior born 1866; Almira Louise born 1868; Emily Esther born 1870; Oliver Isaac born 1873; William Brewer born 1875; Dorothea born and died 1877; Harriet Reynolds born 1879. All of the children were born in Alviso, California now a part of San Jose.

The story continues with the family lines starting with Emily Esther Ortley a granddaughter of Harry Wade. Emily attended school in Alviso four months of the year and the remainder of the year helped her father Capt. Ortley loading hay into a warehouse, while still studying at home. She completed the eighth grade with her class. She became a seamstress and at the age of 20 had her own dress making business.

On June 19, 1901 Emily married George Vogt and soon after moved to Mt. Hamilton, where George Vogt was employed. They later moved to San Francisco.

Their daughter, Alice Almira Vogt, was born August 5, 1908. She met and married George Washington, who was born in Canada, on Aug. 31, 1929 in San Francisco. They had three children George, born Sept. 4, 1930, Mary Alice, born April 20, 1934, and Anita Louise born March 20, 1938. All were born in San Francisco.

George Jr. married Nancy Humphrey on Oct. 10, 1959 and have two daughters, Ruth Emily born Nov. 5,1960 and Lisa Susan born August 16, 1963. George, Nancy and Ruth live in Modesto, California. Lisa married Richard Lamb and have two children, Mark David born May 16, 1993 and Rebecca Emily born Feb. 16, 1995. They live in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mary Alice Washington married Carl Marvin Jensen on January 10, 1953 and have three children, Judith Louise born April 7, 1957, James

Wade Jensen born August 12, 1959 and Janette Marie born July 25, 1962. Marvin and Mary live in Santa Cruz, California.

Judith Louise married Jeffrey Mark Bedell on December 10, 1983 and they have three children, Will Mark Bedell born June 20, 1989, Loryn Susan Bedell born November 11, 1991, and Kai Wade Bedell born April 5, 1996. The family lives on a ranch near San Miguel, California.

James Wade Jensen married Laura McClellan on August 31, 1991 and they have one child Emily Lara Sierra Jensen. Laura has a son, Eric McClellan. They make their home in Modesto, California.

Jan Jensen makes her home in San Juan Bautista, California.

Anita Louise Washington married William A. McGaw, Jr. on December 27, 1956 and they had three children; Peggy Ann born May 29, 1958, in Florida; Melinda Lou born on December 5, 1962, in Tustin, California; and Pamela Susan born on October 29, 1965 in Kailua, Oahu, Hawaii. Anita passed away on January 2, 1982. Peggy McGaw lives in the State of Washington.

Melinda married Richard Azevedo and they have two children; Elliot James born on April 3, 1996 and Kristen Naomi born on October 7, 1997. They live in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Pamela Susan married Thomas Schwartzkopf and they have a daughter Jessica born April 21,1991. They live in Yukon, Oklahoma.

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The story continues with Harriet Reynolds Ortley and she married Judge John Quincy White on February 19, 1913, in San Jose and resided in Ukiah, California. They had two children Mary born in 1914 and John who died shortly after birth.

Mary married her second husband Lt. Col. Clarence Lane and they had two children Barbara Ann Lane born in 1953 and now resides in Greenbrae, California and John Ortley Lane born in 1957 and now resides in Brooklyn, New York.

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Recently relatives of Mary Ann Wade, the fifth child of Harry and Mary Wade, were located. Mary Ann became the first post mistress of Alviso, California and assisted her elderly parents for many years before marrying Charles A. Bradley in 1886. They had a daughter Vernie who married Claude Ingram Sutcliffe and they had three children. (1) Vernon Sutcliffe married Theodore Sanguinetti and were parents of three girls, Sandra, Jennifer and Suzanne; (2) Claudine who married Brad Williamson; and (3) Maxine who married Earl VanHuss.

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There are probably Wade descendents still to be found and I am continuing to look for them as I continue my research.

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HARRY WADE STILL PRESENT IN ALVISO TODAY

Although it is nearly 150 years since Harry Wade and his family settled in Alviso, there are still indications of his presence in that small community at the end of a slough at the south end of San Francisco Bay.

Although in disrepair, the family home is still standing on El Dorado Street. It was prefabricated on the east coast and shipped around the horn on a sailing ship and assembled in 1851. Next door the Wade warehouse, still stands and it too is in disrepair but usable. The Wade name is still clearly visible as Harry George Wade used black brick to make the name.

Even one of the Wade stage coaches still exists and is in pristine condition as it sits in the window of the Wells Fargo Bank's Museum on Montgomery Street, San Francisco. The stagecoach was sold to the Wells Fargo in 1928 by Maggie Higgins, the daughter of Harry George Wade.

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THANK YOU E CLAMPUS VITUS

The descendants of Harry and Mary Wade would like to express their gratitude to the members of E Clampus Vitus for restoring the Wade Monument and making it possible for those who stop at this spot to learn a little more about Death Valley history.

This commemorative imprint of the first, (1957),
49er Keepsake was commissioned
by Earl and Patricia Schmidt, Life Members;
to honor the Wade Family
and other 1849 Pioneer descendants,
and recognize E Clampus Vitus 50 years of
Encampment participation.
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